

Message Text

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ACTION IO-14

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FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7621
INFO AMEMBASSY MANILA

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MANILA FOR USDEL

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: OVIP, OCON, UNWFC
SUBJECT: WORLD FOOD COUNCIL

REF: (A) STATE 127260, (B) STATE 123595, (C) 117059

1. MAURITANIAN GOVERNMENT HAS NOT YET OFFICIALLY NAMED MEMBERS OF ITS DELEGATION TO WORLD FOOD COUNCIL MEETING. SELECTION OF DELEGATION WILL BE DECIDED AT A CABINET OF MINISTERS MEETING AND MAY NOT BE ANNOUNCED UNTIL DAY OR TWO BEFORE DELEGATES DEPART FOR MANILA. EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT DELEGATION WILL PROBABLY BE LED BY MINISTER OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT ABDALLAHI OULD BAH AND INCLUDE DIRECTOR OF MAURITANIAN CEREALS OFFICE GANDEGA GAYE.

2. DR ABDALLAHI OULD BAH WAS BORN IN 1939 IN BOUTLIMIT, MAURITANIA AND RECEIVED HIS M.D. FROM FRENCH UNIVERSITY IN 1964. BOUTLIMIT IS ALSO HOMETOWN OF MAURITANIAN PRESIDENT OULD DADDAH, AND DR. BAH IS MARRIED TO A SISTER OF PRESIDENT. UPON HIS RETURN TO MAURITANIA IN 1964, DR. BAH BEGAN CAREER IN MINISTRY OF HEALTH AS PRACTICING DOCTOR ASSIGNED TO A REGIONAL CAPITAL, WAS PROMOTED TO INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT POSITIONS
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WITHIN THE MINISTRY, BECAME CARDIOLOGIST, AND WAS NAMED MINISTER OF HEALTH IN 1971. IN 1973 PRESIDENT PUT DR. BAH IN CHARGE OF EMERGENCY DROUGHT RELIEF PROGRAM. IN 1975 BAH WAS APPOINTED MINISTER OF DEFENSE. IN MARCH 1977, HE WAS SHIFTED TO RURAL DEVELOPMENT, WHERE AS SUPERVISOR OF CEREALS OFFICE HE IS ONCE AGAIN IN CHARGE OF FOOD RELIEF PROGRAM. BAH IS INTELLIGENT, SZMSTLE, HIGHLY COMPETENT BUREAUCRAT,

FRANK, BUSINESS-LIKE AND TOUGH BARGAINER WHO KNOWS MAURITANIA'S FOOD NEEDS AND PROBLEMS. HE IS KEENLY AWARE OF AND HAS REPEATEDLY EXPRESSED APPRECIATION PUBLICLY FOR KEY ROLE US PLAYED IN KEEPING MAURITANIANS ALIVE DURING DROUGHT YEARS. LANGUAGES: FRENCH AND ARABIC. NOUAKCHOTT A-62 DATED 1975 CONTAINS ADDITIONAL BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON DR. BAH.

3. GANDEGA GAYE IS A CAREER GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL WHO ROSE THROUGH VARIOUS SECTIONS OF MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT TO POSITION OF SECRETARY GENERAL BEFORE BEING APPOINTED LATE 1975 DIRECTOR OF NEWLY CREATED MAURITAHUAN CEREALS OFFICE (ORIGINALLY CONCEIVED AS OPERATOR OF CEREALS STABILIZATION PROGRAM, BUT UP TO NOW CONCERNED ONLY WITH DROUGHT RELIEF PROGRAM). HE IS IN HIS MID-THIRTIES, OUTGOING, GARRULOUS, AND OF DOUBTFUL COMPETENCE. (EMBASSY OFFICERS RELY ON DEPUTY DIRECTOR CEREALS OFFICE FOR ACTION ON US FOOD AID AND INFORMATION ABOUT GIRM FOOD PROGRAMS.) GAYE WAS A MEMBER OF THE MAURITANIAN DELEGATION TO THE 1975 WORLD FOOD COUNCIL MEETING IN ROME AND IS WELL-KNOWN TO FAO OFFICIALS.

4. EMBASSY HANDED SECRETARY BERGLAND'S LETTER TO MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS FOR DELIVERY TO CHIEF GIRM DELEGATION. WE PASSED COPIES OF LETTER TO WORKING LEVEL RURAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICIALS, AND DISCUSSED POINTS IN REFS B AND C. WE WILL ATTEMPT TO DISCUSS ISSUES WITH HEAD OF DELEGATION WHEN DESIGNATED. WILL INFORM MANILA AS SOON AS DELEGATION SELECTED. GIRM REPS WILL PROBABLY BE SYMPATHETIC TO US VIEWS AND OBJECTIVES. BECAUSE OF HIS BACKGROUND AND COMPETENCE, BAH AS AN INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCE DELEGATE COULD SERVE AS A USEFUL INTERLOCUTOR AND COMMUNICATED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TIONS CHANNEL TO OTHER SMALL COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVES. BUT WHEN FUNCTIONING AS MAURITANIAN REPRESENTATIVE, BAH MUST OPERATE WITHIN PARAMETERS IMPOSED BY POSITION AND REALITIES, THAT IS: GIRM RARELY GETS OUT IN FRONT ON ANY ISSUE; RECOGNIZING ITS POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC WEAKNESS AND ITS CRITICAL NEED FOR SUPPORT OF OTHERS, MAURITANIA USUALLY HEWS CLOSELY TO LINE ESTABLISHED BY AFRICAN AND ARAB REGIONAL GROUPINGS. HANDYSIDE

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